

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING SPECIAL MEETING  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
September 30, 2013  
7:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding**

**Present:** Council Member Roxanne M. Burns  
Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.  
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso  
Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith  
Mayor Graham

**Also Present:** Sharon Addison, City Manager

**City staff present:** Jim Mills, Beth Morris, Mike Sligar and Deputy Chief Russ Randall

**DISCUSSIONS**

**Thompson Park Zoo Pavilion Dedication**

Mayor Graham thanked Council and City staff for attending this event.

**Mercy Building**

Mayor Graham stated that a fence was put up around Mercy Hospital with signage containing the COR logo. He indicated that this shows that this project is moving forward.

**Strategy to Staff Critical Positions**

Ms. Addison told Council that she would like to focus on an interim strategy to fill the positions of Confidential Assistant to the City Manager and Fringe Benefits Administrator which are vacant due to recent staff changes and the Executive Secretary to Civil Service which will be vacant due to a future retirement. She said her proposal will not create any new positions in order to fall within the adopted fiscal budget and her intent is to take full advantage of Beth Morris, Executive Secretary to Civil Service while she remains fully employed by the City. She would like to hire a new Executive Secretary to Civil Service so that Ms. Morris is available to train this individual since the support received from Albany in regards to Civil Service is limited and delayed. Further, Ms. Addison said that Ms. Morris certainly qualifies for the Assistant to the City Manager in the interim since she has been providing Human Resources support for the last six to nine months which is a position that needs to grow to fill a gap with staff. She said that Ms. Morris is an excellent writer, speaker and is great with customers and other departments. Lastly, Ms. Addison indicated that she would like to rebrand the position of Fringe Benefit Administrator labeling it as an Administrative Specialist and making it a full-time position. She explained that a position in the DPW department went from full-time to part-time so this is how she can make this part-time position into a full-time position.

In regards to job responsibilities, Ms. Addison explained the essential functions of each position stressing that the Confidential Assistant to the City Manager will be similar to its current duties with the expansion of Human Resources functions and the Administrative Specialist will continue to handle Fringe Benefits while adding the maintenance of employee personnel files and assistance to the Confidential Secretary. She stressed that these changes fall within the scope of the current budget.

Council Member Burns asked if the replacement for Ms. Morris would be a full-time position.

Ms. Addison confirmed that it would be full-time.

Council Member Burns asked if Ms. Morris would fill the Confidential Assistant to the City Manager in the interim and when she retires would Ms. Addison look to fill this position again.

Ms. Addison replied that when Ms. Morris retires she would like to rebrand that position to a Deputy or Assistant City Manager knowing that the charter would need to be adjusted for this change. She noted that this proposal would come during the fiscal budget build.

Since this proposal would be presented down the road, Council Member Burns asked if Council is being asked to support her recommendation of a Confidential Assistant to the City Manager and an Administrative Specialist.

Ms. Addison confirmed that was correct.

Mayor Graham questioned the recruitment of a Civil Service Executive Secretary.

Ms. Morris explained that this is an exempt position which is appointed by the Civil Service Commission and is not tested. She said that the Civil Service Commission would advertise the position and conduct interviews.

Mayor Graham asked what qualifications are needed for this position.

Ms. Morris stated that this position requires somebody who pays attention to detail and is able to stand up to the appointing authorities who might want to go against Civil Service Law. She added that a degree in Business would be beneficial too. She explained that she provides Civil Service support to the Watertown School District, the Watertown Housing Authority and the Library as well as the City.

Mayor Graham pointed out that education is important in terms of an ability to deal with other professionals at the same level.

Ms. Morris said that experience is important also but this is a specialized position because there are not many people that do Civil Service. She noted that it will take approximately four to five years to fully learn and feel comfortable in this position.

In terms of the Commission, Ms. Morris stated there are three members and that they are aware of her plans.

Council Member Butler inquired about the reimbursement from the School District.

Jim Mills, City Comptroller explained that it will decrease as a result of filling the position with a lower salary. He also noted that any new person would be at a different retirement tier.

Ms. Morris mentioned that she will not leave the Civil Service position until it is filled.

Council Member Macaluso remarked that orientating a new person plus assisting in the Manager's

Office seems like a lot to put on Ms. Morris' plate.

Ms. Morris indicated that she has thought long and hard about this decision and her intent is to work in the City Manager's Office and be a resource for the new Civil Service person.

Ms. Addison said that there will be breakage during this transition but her job is to minimize it.

Mayor Graham said that this is an interim fix and that it seems like a reasonable approach to bridging the gap. He mentioned that recently there has been an issue of no staff working at times in the City Manager's Office and that this is not a perception that the City wants to set. He stated that it is important to have a solution which keeps the office staffed at all times. Any other proposal, he said, would need more discussion at a later time.

Council Member Smith stated that he does not have a problem with this interim structure but wondered how long it will take the Commission to hire someone and will Ms. Morris be a part of that process.

Ms. Morris said the Commission is ready to advertise in Sunday's paper and would like to review applications as they come in so that interviews can be scheduled. She indicated that the Commission intends to include her in the process but ultimately it is the Commission's decision.

Mayor Graham asked what kind of person would apply for this.

Ms. Morris replied that an executive secretarial person with some human resource experience would make a good candidate. She spoke of the process when she was hired and her experience at that time.

Council Member Butler asked what would be the minimum qualifications.

Ms. Morris stated that because this is an exempt position it does not need minimum qualifications.

Summarizing the changes, Council Member Butler asked for an explanation of the salary for the Administrative Specialist.

Ms. Addison said it is based on what she expects that person to do and how she expects to grow that position in the future.

Council Member Butler said that he does not have a problem with this short term solution and that it makes sense.

Council Member Burns agreed that this plan makes a lot of sense and agreed with the Mayor in that the City Manager's Office cannot be like a ghost town so staffing needs to be put in place.

**Motion was made by Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith to move into Executive Session to discuss the employment history of a particular individual.**

**Motion was seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

Council moved into Executive Session at 7:30 p.m.

Council reconvened at 7:49 p.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 7:49 p.m. by motion of Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith, seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

**Ann M. Saunders**  
City Clerk